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PART III

DIET AND DOMESTIC ECONOMICS

CHAPTER VII

LOCAL AND KINSHIP GROUPINGS

The Problem of Distribution.

000 I HAVE described the nutritional habits of the Bemba and their methods of cooking and storing food. It now remains to consider their consumption of supplies. In any particular tribe the system of domestic economics determines the amount of food that is consumed. The traditional system of procuring and preparing the different meals fixes the quantities that can be eaten daily, in a community in which victuals cannot be purchased ready for use. The size of the group and the rules by which the food is allocated, regulate the intake of each individual. The type of nutritive inter-dependence between one consuming group and another ultimately affects the regularity and security of the people's supplies, especially in areas without any organized trade or exchange. For this reason, certain characteristic features of primitive dietaries, such as their irregularity from day to day or month to month, can only be explained by an analysis of the structure and functions of the different consuming groups in any tribe.

• 002 Among the Bemba it is rare for any individual to housekeep alone. Several households are grouped round one granary and even one kitchen, and are linked by close economic ties with a wider circle of relatives in the same village, with whom they constantly eat in common, and on occasion pool supplies. Hence, in order to understand the daily distribution, it will be necessary to study the composition of the Bemba family, the principles of kinship grouping, and the structure of the village itself.

Besides this regular unit of consumption each household is connected by bonds of sentiment and legal identification with relatives in other villages, 20, 50 or even as much as 100 miles away. In fact these kinship obligations result in quite a considerable distribution of food. If a man's crops are destroyed by

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If a man's crops are destroyed by

some sudden calamity, or if he has planted insufficient for his needs, relatives in his own village may be able to help him by giving him baskets of grain or offering him a share in their meals. But if the whole community has been visited by the same affliction, such as a locust swarm or a raider elephant, the householder will move himself and his family to live with other kinsmen in an area where food is less scarce. The lack of permanence of Bemba dwellings and the ample supply of land makes such temporary shifts easy. In fact, with this particular economic system, it is simpler for the needy individuals to move to a district of plenty than for the food itself to be transferred to them. Hospitality of this sort is commonly practised in the hunger season, when families go all over the country 'looking for porridge' (*ukufwayo bwali*), or 'running from hunger' (*ukubutuka nsala*)—the rather dramatic Bemba phrase used to describe the custom of paying long visits to better-off relatives. Hence the legal obligations of kinship result in a particular type of food distribution, both within the village and the surrounding neighbourhood, which is not found in those modern native communities in which a more individual domestic economy is practised.

It must be remembered also, that food and beer are constantly used to fulfil all sorts of social obligations, to reward labour, or to honour men of position. Large quantities of victuals are actually distributed in this manner, and on this use of foodstuffs the political and economic life of the tribe depends. A study of Bemba catering must, therefore, include the division of the commoner's or the chief's supplies with these particular ends in view.

To conclude, we are dealing with a system of domestic economy in which the year's supplies of each householder are distributed between a group of relatives, either within the village or in neighbouring communities, who share the contents of a granary or an eating-pot, and a type of local and political association largely dependent on the provision of meals and beer. The amount of food available for each family, the regularity of the provision from day to day or season to season, and the variations from area to area are largely determined by these purely sociological factors.

The Bemba Village.

To describe the structure of a typical Bemba village is at first sight a difficult task, since one of its chief characteristics is its

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Hence, though the Bemba village is a kinship unit, its composition is by no means rigidly fixed. There are certain main principles of local association, but the practice of temporary matrilocal marriage makes for a good deal of change from one community to another, and the even balance between the powers of the father and those of the maternal uncle allow a man a number of possible allegiances.[1] Admiration for rank, or for wealth under modern conditions, sometimes cut across the principles of kinship, so that men may be found living with more distant rather than nearer relatives. The former have a higher status. Added to all these factors the Bemba are great visitors and from childhood up spend months or even a year or two 'seeing' relatives (*ukumona bantu*) in different parts of the country, and this habit of movement seems definitely part of their social system.[2]

Modern Changes in Village Structure.

In spite of the possible variations in the composition of a Bemba village, it remains a closely knit unit. The pattern of behaviour between the different relatives and the legal obligations that bind them are traditionally fixed. If a man settles down in a community, and builds a hut there, he does so usually as a son-in-law of a man of that village, more rarely as a brother, a maternal nephew, or a maternal grandson, and very occasionally as a son. If a woman leaves her parent's village and joins another community she goes there either as the wife of a man returning to live with his people, or as a deserted or widowed woman taking refuge with the members of her own matrilineal descent group. In either case, the behaviour of each new arrival is fixed, and also their type of economic inter-dependence as will be described in the next chapter. In a modern village there are two marked changes. In the first place these settlements are no longer composed of close relatives of the headman, but consist of a series of small kinship groups —two or three households, a mother and two married daughters,

[1] Compare the much more fixed structure of the village in a matrilineal society where patrilocal marriage is practised, i.e. in Melanesian societies where the boy goes to live with his maternal uncle in adolescence and marries there, or in the composition of the kraal among the strongly patrilocal, patrilineal Bantu societies in South Africa.

[2] Missionaries claim that the building of permanent villages in this area would ease the problem of locating schools. This is true, but it would be unlikely to stop the children of the village being sent to 'see' their grandparents 30–50 miles away for six months at a time.

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602 621 177 a man and his wife and his mother, &c. In these circumstances the unit of economic co-operation is smaller than formerly; the families detach themselves more easily and go to join other villages according to their fancy; and the authority of the headman is lessened, since his kinship with them is slighter than in the old-fashioned village.

602 621 A typical kinship unit of the old-fashioned type is described in greater detail in Chap. X. An analysis of the social structure of a number of such communities can be found in Appendix, Table E, for those who have a special interest in kinship problems. The economic system based on these types of local grouping must now be described.

The Village Scene.

621 The huts in a Bemba village fill a circular or oval space in the middle of a ring of garden-beds. Those on the outskirts are built side by side, anything from 3 to 20 ft. apart, each with its door facing to the centre. The huts in the centre are scattered without much determinate plan.[1] When building a village the older men take the good sites such as small eminences or ant-hills, and their huts tend to be larger and better built. Their sons-in-law either build close to them, or else, if there are sufficient young men to form a group of their own, these construct their huts round the open dancing space (*ulubansa*) at one side of the village. The granaries of house-holders living on the outskirts stand in a ring on the garden-beds, the others are placed near their [345] owners' huts. The men's club-houses (*nsaka*) are nothing more than open shelters, roofs supported on uprights, and these are usually built at each end of the village.

342 [177] 513 Huts are circular or square in shape,[2] with broad verandas in the case of men of substance. A man and his wife sleep in each hut, but any child over two or three (the weaning age) is sent to sleep with its grandparents, and in an old couple's house it is common to find five or six small children stretched in a row on a mat in front of the fire. Young girls usually sleep in the hut of a young married woman whose husband is temporarily away, or with a widowed woman. They often change their sleeping-

[1] In the larger chiefs' villages the huts are divided into *icitente* (*ifitente*), separate areas under the control of a headman.

[2] The square huts are the more modern variety.

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252 of dishes and enamel basins, and each is covered with a basket. Then the housewife hands them one by one to waiting children, saying, 'For X', 'For Z', and the little boys and girls hurry off to different huts or *nsaka* in the village carrying their loads on their heads.

264 During meal-times a different form of grouping displays itself. The unit of food preparation does not coincide exactly with the unit of consumption, although both exceed the limits of the individual family. The first division of the community at meal-times is along the lines of sex. Men and women eat separately. Even husband and wife never share a meal, except at night in the privacy of their own hut. It is considered shameful for the two sexes to eat together, and the Bemba women back from the mines who occasionally copy the European custom of joint meals, usually do so out of bravado, and are spoken of in bated breath. [832] To say, 'She eats with men' is almost equivalent to calling a woman a prostitute in all but the urban areas, and the efforts of some educationalists to introduce family meals as part of 'Christian family life' have been hotly criticized by older natives.

This grouping of the sexes at meal-times is further subdivided on the basis of age, kinship, and friendship. Nobody eats alone. Each belongs to a set of his contemporaries who regularly share meals together. The grouping by age is not absolute, but is customary and follows the people's inclinations. In a small village it is usual for all the *bakalamba*—'big men'—to eat together at their own *nsaka* or to group together in turn on one of their respective verandas. In a larger settlement there may be two or three such groups of old men usually united by close ties of kinship. The young men eat at the village shelter where their food is regularly brought them. [602] It may not be possible for all the young married men of a village to eat round one dish, for the in-law avoidances, still punctiliously observed among the Bemba, prevent a husband from feeding with any of his wife's relatives, real or classificatory. Hence it is customary to find round the village *nsaka* at least two groups—the young men born in the village and the outsiders who have come into the community to marry their sisters or cross-cousins. When the porridge arrives they form into two rings back to back round their own dishes. In larger villages there is a greater choice of possible associates, and personal friendship and geographical propinquity help to fix the choice. Even where the *nsaka* system

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264 to organize the supply of eating-baskets sent to the young men's shelter. There may be two one day and twelve another.[1] It does not matter. Every mother-in-law sends just whenever she has time and supplies, so that the men of the village have a varying amount to eat from day to day. The regularity of the diet is thus directly affected by the symbolic use of offerings of cooked food.

The Cooking Team.

252 476 602 We have turned for a moment from our main subject, the joint preparation of food, but it will be seen that the system of inter-dependent matrilocal households provides two units of economic co-operation, the women's and the men's. The former look for relish, fetch firewood, pound, grind, and cook together, and usually do their gardening work in twos and threes. The latter clear the bush for gardens jointly and, more rarely, hoe in common. But it is important to remember that the ties of kinship between the women's group are stronger than those between men. The women who work together are usually the old grandmother, her married daughter, her unmarried girls and adolescent granddaughters, besides other female relatives temporarily with her. The team may not be as large, of course. Every household in the village does not belong to a 'big house'. There may be only two or three individual families linked together, especially in a new village. But the basis of co-operation is the same in each case—mother and daughter, grandmother and granddaughter, sister and sister,[2] &c., and it is the matrilocal family pattern which will be ultimately reproduced [595] as a normal process of development. So much is this the case that the wives of a polygamist never cook together, but each works with her own mother, sister, or any other female relatives who may happen to be in the village.[3] It is the solidarity and common activities of groups of the mother-daughter type which form the basis of the Bemba village. A man's own female relatives, his mother and sister, may be dependent on him, but they do not [606 607] form part of the cooking unit. In-law taboos prevent a woman from co-operating closely with her mother-in-law, and her relations with her sister-in-law are usually constrained, if not hostile.

[1] Cf. p. 183. [2] Using these terms in the classificatory sense.

[3] The wives of a chief are often an exception in this respect. They seem to have accepted the status of polygamy more completely than the wives of commoners, and the heavy work involved in cooking for tribute labour makes it almost necessary for them to co-operate.

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A man helps his sister and her children by cutting them gardens or giving them uncooked food, but not by inviting them to share in the daily meals.

The men's group based on the matrilocal system is smaller and less closely knit. Between the sons-in-law attached to one household there is a feeling of close friendship and familiarity. These young men eat and work together, and the term *Ciufi munandi*, 'the man who married with me', or into the same family, is one of affection and good fellowship. There are no taboos between a man and his wife's sisters. He laughs and jokes with them because he may one day marry them, and he works in their gardens if they need help. But the young husbands often come from different villages and clans, and will want, as soon as they can, to have gardens of their own and perhaps to take their wives back to their villages. In the same way there may be co-operation from time to time between an old man and one of his own young kinsmen, such as his grandson or maternal nephew, but these also come and go, marry in other villages, and get work with Europeans. This group does not remain in close association throughout life as do the women of the matrilocal group, whether the latter remain in the same village or not.[1] This fact has important bearings at the present time. Though the unit of male labour is often non-existent, with the absence of so many of the men at the mines, the domestic and gardening economy of the women remains for the most part intact, and there seems no doubt that women deserted for months or even years by their husbands are more happily placed in a matrilocal community than in a patrilocal one.[2]

The Value of the Cooking Team.

The practical results of this type of domestic economics should be considered, since it is apparently one that is likely to change

[1] One legal case concerned a young married woman, one of six sisters, real or classificatory, who had lived in the same village and worked so happily together that when her husband removed her to his own village after the necessary years of service, she could not bear to live away from her family. The contrast between the cheerful female group in her own village and her relative isolation in her husband's community was too great. She ran back home for the third time during my stay at the village (Pambalasa, 1930). Divorce was the final result. Such a case is an extreme instance of the female solidarity which is so marked in a matrilocal tribe of this kind.

[2] Dr. Margaret Read confirms this on the basis of a comparative study between the patrilocal Ngoni and the matrilocal Chewa of Nyasaland.

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574 lady of rank, whom I knew to have eaten little that day, refused an invitation to a meal. She asked me, with a sniff, who they took her for? Was she to cross the village 'just to sit down to a few mushrooms'?

574 622 The hospitality given to travelling chiefs must be reckoned in a different category. At the visit of the *mfumu*, each woman must contribute a little flour, and the headman produce chickens, the gift of honour, and, if possible, beer. But the presentation of the basket of flour and the live fowls is an act of homage, rather than mere provision for the traveller. It is brought by the headman and his elders and offered with the formal salutation of respect (*ukutota panshi*)—clapping and rolling on the back on the ground —and is reckoned as part of the chief's dues as the owner of the land (cf. Chap. XIII). But in any case it would be thought impossible to give a chief cooked food. He could not eat it because porridge cooked on 'impure' fire would endanger his life,[1] and it would be considered, I think, in the nature of an insult. Chiefs visiting each other will exchange uncooked food to be prepared by their respective staffs, but only a chief's head wife could send a royal visitor dishes of porridge and relish. All these distinctions show clearly the extent to which prestige is associated with the right to distribute food rather than its mere possession or consumption, and it is not surprising that the whole etiquette of feeding travellers is considered so important by a people constantly preoccupied with problems of status. Every traveller's departure is followed by lengthy discussions among the women as to what he received and what he ought to have received, and the Bemba proverb, 'Flour which is not yours is ash' (*Bunga ubushili bwenu, mito*), can be well understood.

574 602 609 Finally, there are strangers to be fed. This is an important matter at the present time since many natives, travelling four or five hundred miles up the motor road, are forced to stay *en route* at villages in which they have no close relatives. Hence it is important to discover what the old tradition of hospitality was and whether it is still observed. The correct procedure for a man entering a village is to ground his spear and sit down in silence in the veranda of the nearest hut. He should not speak until one

[1] The chief's wife has to make new fire either by friction or with matches and sometimes to mud the floor freshly before she can prepare his food when in a strange village.

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of the inhabitants comes up and asks him his origin and works out in the interminable African fashion the line of his descent. Then it may become clear whose relative, if anybody's, he is, and therefore whose responsibility. This practice is usually followed still, but the old custom of making a ceremonial obeisance in front of the headman's hut, and thus claiming a meal from him, I only saw once observed. On the motor road hospitality rules are changing. Nearing Kasama I have heard natives coming up from the mines shouting, 'I am dying, I, a member of the such-and-such a clan,' and such an assertion of clan membership would have been enough to ensure a meal formerly. Nowadays this is emphatically not so. Villagers on the motor road would have been eaten out of house and home if they had stuck to the old rules of hospitality. A certain amount of food is actually sold along the route, usually at exorbitant rates, but there is no doubt that men and their families returning from the mines suffer real privation on the way.[1] The obligation to share food with nearer relatives is still observed even in urban districts, but not the wider ties of clan membership.

Permanent or Semi-permanent Visitors.

More permanent hospitality is offered to kinsmen who come to stay for six weeks to some months, either because they are short of supplies, have quarrelled with their relatives at home, are back on holiday from the mines, or because they want to amuse themselves by a change.[2] Women visitors who are near relatives of the wife, whether married or not, are easily incorporated into the women's domestic team. The matrilocal family group is merely extended to include additional real or classificatory mothers, daughters, cross-cousins, or grandchildren. For a short visit a hut will be cleared for them; for a longer stay a new house may be built. If the visitor is a person of status she will be given millet of her own to grind, if possible, since that is the highest compliment. If supplies are shorter, she will have a basket of flour divided out to her, or otherwise she will merely share in the family dish and her husband will eat at the *nsaka*. Usually the arrangement varies, according to conditions, from day to day.

[1] The Compound Manager at Luanshya estimated that a man returning from the mines on foot requires 10*s*. at least to spend on food *en route*.

[2] The former visits take place in the hunger months, January to March, and the latter in the hot season, August to November, when the garden work is done.

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602 Grandchildren constantly arrive for long visits at the older couple's huts. Small children at weaning go to sleep with their maternal grandparents; when older they might travel a day or two's journey to stay with their father's people and may remain there for a month or more. Children with parents at the mines are also left very generally with their grandparents, usually maternal, and may live there until they are of marriageable age or after. They become the children of the household and the tie is probably more intimate with grandparents than it is with parents, and is certainly less subject to taboos. Children whose parents live in the village often eat with their grandmother for choice, just as they regularly sleep at her hut.

A housewife may also undertake to feed, temporarily or permanently, certain of her male kinsmen, if they are left widowers or are not yet married. This group includes her younger unmarried brothers and her sons. A son may always return to his mother's village if his wife dies or leaves him and he will be certain of a welcome. Men say that their wives often leave them at a time of famine and go home to their own people, but that a mother would never refuse to cook for her son. 'There is always food with the mother. Even if she has only a few ground-nuts left, she will fry them and give them to you,' a native put it to me. A woman has no legal obligation to feed her married son, since he belongs to his wife's local group, but the emotional attachment continues strong and a son will always be given preference if he returns to his mother's community.[1]

A woman will not regularly feed her father. There is a constrained and respectful attitude between them from the time of the girl's adolescence, but she will send him dishes 'for respect'. Her [603] grandfather, on the other hand, whether paternal or maternal, she is especially bound to look after. A man has technically preemptive rights to marry his granddaughter and often jokingly addresses her as his wife' when she is a child, whether he intends to marry her or not, and it is therefore considered fitting that she should feed him in his old age if he is left alone.

[538] [1] Many proverbs contrast the behaviour of the mother with that of other women, e.g. 'Rejoice that your mother is alive, the mother of your friend won't allow her food-rack to be touched.' *Sankata, noko acili po, noko ua mubio tekatilwa pa luino*, or 'In a village where you have no mother, your work is to beg,' *Mu mushi umushili noko, no kupula, milimo*. Cf. *Dictionnaire Français-Chibemba*, L. Guillerme, 1920.

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A number of the husband's relatives also come on long visits. His male kinsmen, if unmarried or widowed, must be regularly fed by the housewife, who prepares them separate dishes if possible. If married and of junior status their wives will help with the cooking, since there is no strong avoidance between a woman and her husband's brother's wife, who may, in fact, become her co-wife if the former dies. But the female relatives of the husband, his mother and sisters, stand in a rather different category, as has been described, and a widowed or deserted wife who has 'gone to her brother' will work alone with her children and be given food of her own to cook.

In all these different forms of hospitality it will be seen how the giving and receiving of food has acquired symbolic value, and that the difference between cooked and uncooked food, special dishes, or the manner of serving them may indicate distinctions in rank, kinship, or age, and that much of the cooking done by the Bemba housewife is an expression of these various degrees of status.

Division of Meat.

Since meat is a perishable food that must be divided at once, it is natural that its distribution follows different rules. Every bit of the animal is known by name and graded according to its social value, but I did not find that the portions of game to be allotted to different kinsmen were so clearly defined as seems to be so in the case of cattle among a number of the pastoral Bantu. With a big animal the chief should be given tribute of a leg, while the headman of the village has some honoured portion according to convenience. The father-in-law of the hunter, his father, or *nalume*, have also their gift of respect, but the rest of the joints appear to be distributed according to the hunters' inclinations, and I have seen all sorts of portions—hind-leg, foreleg, or back given to these different relatives.

The cattle killed for sacrifice at the chief's court are, however, divided according to very definite rules—often according to the symbolic associations of each part, as for instance the gift of the heart to Citimululu at the slaying of an ox at the founding of his new village. I have taken notes at six such divisions of a beast, but the distribution cannot be understood without a knowledge of the functions of the different dignitaries of the court.

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423 peremptory demands upon him, and I noticed that in old-fashioned villages this was often done, but the same would not be true of 888 the wife's mother's brother. In the same way the father's sister, the *nyina senge* can ask a maternal niece for baskets of grain, although she would be unlikely to do so in the case of her maternal nephew.

The headman can ask his villagers to help him with food if he is in want, although this would be an unlikely occurrence, but the rights of a chief to send for supplies to help him in sudden difficulties, particularly over entertaining, are frequently exercised (cf. p. 253). In fact, so much is the idea of authority associated with the right to levy dues of this kind that natives use the word *ukutula* or 'to give tribute' of any demand made by an elder relative of a younger.

Modern Changes in Kinship Dues.

423 It is common knowledge that in many Bantu societies money is now being substituted for the older kinship dues levied on food ●602 or cattle. To what extent is this the case in the Bemba area? We 177 have seen that the Bemba husband occasionally tries to sell the contents of his granary, whereas formerly, though he was actually the owner of the millet store, he allowed his wife the use of it. In the same way I have seen elder brothers make demands on their juniors for shillings or sixpences instead of asking for a portion of their grain or beer. But this seems only to occur in districts near white towns, and the practice was confined as far as I saw it to men of the clerk or domestic servant type. Big dues levied on young men's mine-earnings, such as are reported from so many parts of South Africa, and from the Ila district in Northern Rhodesia,[1] seemed very uncommon among the Bemba. I think this fact can probably be accounted for in two ways. First, in a society in which the power of the mother's family and that of the father's is very evenly divided, the elders are not in such a strong position to exact dues from their younger relatives as they are in a markedly patriarchal or matriarchal society. Among the Bemba it may be the father, the maternal uncle, or the maternal grandfather who is the boy's male guardian, and it will depend on personality and general circumstances which finally maintains his authority, but in a typical patrilineal society such as those of the

[1] Smith and Dale, op. cit., vol. i, p. 385.

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Southern or Eastern Bantu there is no doubt that the father, and after him the elder brother, has the predominant rights over the property of the young. Secondly, and this is a point which we have to recur to frequently, the fact that the Bemba never kept cattle or any form of wealth that could be measured or counted naturally affects their attitude to money. To change from the 'cattle standard' to money currency appears to be an easy transition in some ways, and all over Africa natives are earning money and turning it into cattle or, conversely, giving cattle to relatives who sell the beasts and so get money. But where kinship prerogatives consist of undefined rights to exact service and to demand food when in need the substitution of money seems a less obvious equivalent. Where it occurs, and it is beginning to occur, it creates an entirely new relationship between elder and younger, son-in-law and father-in-law, rather than a modification of the old. Nor have the elders the same bargaining power with the young as in some Bantu tribes at the present day. We are told from such widely distant areas as South Africa and Uganda that boys who earn money away from this tribal area return to give a share to their fathers or brothers for fear the latter will not provide them with cattle or goats for their marriage payments.[1] The Bemba boy on the other hand gave service for his bride and was therefore not beholden to his elders to any large extent, and is not so to-day. He gives money to his father-in-law for his bride, and he distributes presents among his relatives as he pleases, but this is considered an act of grace, I think, and not a due. It is not true to say that the young Bemba of to-day are hampered in their progress by the exorbitant demands of the old.

Education in Distribution.

To conclude, the Bemba system of food consumption is determined by rules of individual ownership subject to the claims of elder relatives. How is this set of economic values impressed on each new generation? What sanctions exist to enforce the various rules involved?

Among the Bemba it is clear that there are certain well-marked attitudes towards the use of food which the child learns to adopt almost from babyhood. In the infant's life edible objects are things which his mother and near relatives never refuse to give him on

[1] K. Oberg, 'Banyankole Kinship Organization', *Africa*, vol. xi, April 1938, pp. 153, 158.

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Sharing and Supernatural Sanctions.

This definite training in a particular method of distributing food is still further enforced by supernatural sanctions. The Bemba are deeply convinced that relatives who die with a sense of injury have the power to return and afflict the living with misfortune, illness, and even a lingering death from a wasting disease. To injure a man or a woman in this way, and in particular to deny them food when hungry, ill, or cold, is to refuse them their kinship dues. In fact, the definition usually given of such a haunting spirit (*iciwa*) is that it is 'someone who died with grief catching him at the throat' because when he was old his children would not give him food. Of such a calamity the Bemba are genuinely afraid. Even sophisticated young men of the present time speak nervously of the possibility of certain near relatives, particularly the mother, or the mother's brother, dying aggrieved, and there is no doubt that the fear of supernatural punishment is still a very strong sanction enforcing the sharing of food and the provision for dependents.

Besides these positive inducements to share, it must be remembered that the Bemba system of distribution is closely correlated with their type of housing and particular methods of preparing food. We have described the housewife threshing and grinding out of doors, with her store cupboard at some distance from her hut. It is impossible, in a Bemba village, to conceal the fact that extra flour has been prepared, that beer is ready for drinking, or that there is an unexpected supply of meat. The complete publicity of primitive housekeeping is one of the most effective sanctions for the system of distribution of food which they commonly practise. It is important here to notice that Bemba housing is changing under the influence of the white man. The native is taught to build huts with more rooms and even to store his food in his own enclosure. It remains to be seen whether the Bantu will continue to be so generous, according to our standards, when they can conceal their supplies as effectively as we do ourselves.

It can be said therefore that if the Bemba people share their meals and extend hospitality to a wider circle of relatives than we do, it is because from their earliest years they have never been able to consider food as something which could be procured, owned,

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It will be noted that the number of commoners given positions of authority is under half the total number in each territory. The far greater number of chief's relatives holding office in Mwamba's country is due to the number of surviving descendants of the previous Mwamba (Mubanga Cipoya) an extremely powerful ruler, who put his relatives in charge of villages all over the country.

(*a*) In the case of Citimukulu, the chief's relatives consisted of: Brother of the chief, 1; sisters, mothers, or maternal nieces of the chief (*banamfumu*), 7; sons of the chief (*bana ba mfumu*), 10 (9 men and 1 woman); grandchildren of the chief (*beshikulu ba mfumu*), 9 (8 men and 1 woman); relatives in law (*bukwe*), 3 (2 men and 1 woman).

(*b*) In the case of Mwamba, the chief's relatives consisted of: 1 brother, 1 sister; 11 ranked as 'children of the chief', 3 of the present Mwamba, 3 descendants of sons of the past Mwamba, and 5 of the penultimate Mwamba (5 women and 6 men in all); 7 were grandchildren, 4 descendants of other royal lines; and 3 descendants of the wives of former Citimukulus.

(*c*) In the case of Nkula, the chief's relatives consisted of: 1 brother and 2 sisters, 5 'children of the chief', 4 grandchildren (1 woman), and 4 relatives in law, and 9 descendants of other royal lines.

III. *Details showing kinship composition of typical villages.*

(Only adult members of the village are noted. Such terms as brother, sister, grandchild are used to indicate own brother and sister as well as the classificatory extension of these terms.)

(*a*) A village composed of the headman's own *uluptwa* (the bilateral group composed of near relatives of both sides of the family, plus affinal kinsmen).

e.g. *Cikutwe*, a young *mukabilo* of Citimukulu's territory (1934).

Relatives of the present headman, including matrilineal group: 1 mother, 4 mother's brothers and wives, 2 sisters and husbands, 2 maternal nieces (deserted), 2 daughters (one married), and 3 grandchildren (1 male and 2 female) with their spouses.

Others: 2 married brothers temporarily resident; and 2 deserted wives, relatives of the headman's wife.

Relatives of the past headman:

Remains of *matrilineal group*: 1 maternal niece (widowed), 3 grandsons (married), 2 granddaughters (married).

Remains of *matrilocal group*: 2 married daughters and husbands, and 1 son (married) temporarily resident.

(It will be noted that Bemba make a difference between the kinsmen of the present and past headman. Both groups are really kin to the

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present headman, since the title is hereditary, but the first are closer connexions to him than the second, and the distinction is made between those men and women who actually joined the community on his account and those who originally belonged to the past village.)

(*b*) *Two villages composed of the family group of the headman plus that of one or more other bakalamba* (*great ones*), i.e. contemporaries, men who have remained in the village after the death of the previous headman, or those temporarily members of the community, while they are gathering a sufficient following to enable them to build a village of their own.

e.g. *Pambalasa*, near Chinsali (1930).

Relatives of headman:

Matrilocal group: 2 wives, 2 married daughters and husbands, 2 married daughters (husbands away), 2 married grandsons, wife's maternal niece (deserted).

Matrilineal group: 1 mother, 1 married sister and husband, 1 maternal niece (deserted), 1 maternal nephew and wife.

Others: 2 married sons and wives.

Relatives of a mukalamba. ShiNconi, husband of headman's maternal niece (i.e. still living in his wife's village, but in his middle age become head of a group of his own), 1 mother, 2 married sisters, 2 brothers (married to Pambalasa's daughters), 1 brother also married into the village.

Relatives of a mukalamba. ShiMulenga (awaiting permission to form a village of his own) and head of a following, i.e. 2 wives, 1 mother, widowed wife of father, 4 married sisters, 3 married maternal nieces, wife's brother, 3 unmarried maternal nephews. (With this following ShiMulenga formed a village in 1931.)

Kacienga, near Shiwa Dandu (1931 and 1933).

Headman's *matrilocal group* composed of his wife and 7 married daughters and their husbands; the mother and deserted sister of one of his sons-in-law, and a married sister of his wife's.

Two bakalamba, distant connexions of the former headman, each with his own small following composed of 2 married daughters and their husbands.

(*c*) *Village formed on a basis of common purpose.*

Mulenga, near Nkula, 1933. The village of an *ngulu*, i.e. man possessed by a chief's spirit and able to heal people through his knowledge of medicines and powers of clairvoyance. In this instance the kinship structure was hardly apparent, since so many strangers had joined Mulenga in order to get his blessing (many of them barren women hoping to secure children through the blessing of the spirit).

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Fishing in the neighbouring river, Cambesi, was also lucrative. The community was composed as follows:

The headman's relatives: 2 married daughters and husbands, 2 wife's sisters (deserted); 1 maternal niece (married), 1 maternal nephew (married), 1 female cross-cousin (deserted), 1 son (married).

Strangers: 9 married couples some temporarily and some permanently part of the community, and 3 deserted wives.

This made the total male and female relatives of the headman, 12, and the total number of strangers, 21, an unprecedented state of affairs in an ordinary village.

Cf. also the two villages analysed on pp. 385–6.

[p. 416 is blank]

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Expressed Purposes of the Chisungu

Secondary motives. Apart from such primary considerations, the Bemba, no doubt, have a number of secondary motives. As in the case of other rituals of this type the chisungu is an occasion for entertainment and the meeting of friends and relatives. These are mainly women, but men also visit the chisungu village for the purpose. As we have seen, few of the rites are solemn and a number of them provide opportunities for amusing play-acting, games and solo dancing. Women, in fact, speak of some of the rites as 'just playing'. The festive aspect of the chisungu must have been more marked in the old days when the rites took longer, the supply of food and beer was probably more ample, and the young men of the community were not away at the mines.

A number of Bemba seem consciously to realize that the chisungu is an occasion for the display of social status—the status of the parents of the bride and bridegroom and of the *nacimbusa* herself. At the ceremony I attended the exchange of food was, in Bemba eyes, on a pitiably small scale and, as we saw, Nangoshye constantly complained that she was being insulted by the mean fare cooked for her. Ceremonies in the old days seem to have involved a series of presentations of covered dishes of food (*ukutebeta*), of the kind known as 'honouring the son-in-law' that mark his reception into his bride's village before the chisungu takes place. A written account I obtained of the chisungu in the old days included four such preparations of food besides the porridge of festivity of which I have given an account.

This is a society in which the ceremonial expression of kinship obligations is important, especially in the long process of aggregating a young husband to his wife's village, so it is not unexpected that women should give importance to the chisungu as a centre of attraction for kinsmen. It is probable that much of the six months or so formerly given to the ceremony, was devoted to these ends. A successful and well-run ceremony attracts large crowds and contributes to the prestige of the *nacimbusa* and also to the village in which it is held. The dances provide an opportunity for expressing respect for status, so the *nacimbusa* employs the magic of attraction to make people come to her ceremony. Nangoshye explained that one of her objects in working so hard over the large models of snakes and other objects in the chisungu hut was to get the

614 it must be emphasized that the matriclans in this area are in no sense political or territorial groups. Through clan affiliation a man traces his descent, his rank, and, if he belongs to the royal clan, his right to succeed to chieftainship. In the old days substitution of men or women in the payment of blood revenge could take place within the clan. But no property is owned in common by the clan. There is neither joint occupation of land nor collective ritual activities. The distinguishing features of the Bemba clan are the name, praise-name and legends associated with the original ancestress and also, in some cases, with her brother.

554 614 616 Characteristic aspects of these Bemba clans are the hierarchy of status in which they are ranged and the reciprocity of paired clan relations. The former is based on the alleged priority of the arrival of clan ancestors in Bemba country and also proximity to the heart of the country. Highest in rank and forming the royal clan are the Crocodiles. This hierarchy is to be observed in other groups in the area, though the royal clans differ. Clan names, generally those of natural objects, animals, birds etc., have been called totemic, although there are few, if any, food taboos associated with them.(1) The words used are frequently archaic and are common to other groups in the area, e.g. Lamba, Kaonde, Lala. The story of their acquisition is the basis for the pairing of opposite clans. The clans paired seem to be those whose clan symbols are naturally antipathetic or complementary to one another, e.g., fish and crocodile, mushroom and rain. They are not paired systematically but often by purely arbitrary factors connecting the clan with several such partners.

616 764 582 602 Reciprocal functions of a paired clan are chiefly confined to funeral rites.(2) The *'banungwe'*, the name used reciprocally by members of paired clans, of a dead man's family both help and hinder at the burial ceremony. Ritually expressed, therefore, the traditional attitude between partners is one of hostility yet, as the complementary nature of the clan names often implies, one of service. Between partners there is ease and freedom of behaviour, privileges are taken and formerly, it is said, marriages between them were preferential. Briefly, reciprocal clan relationship among the Bemba implies ritual interdependence, partnership of rivals expressed in ritual, traditional joking and licence in daily relations and preferential marriage claims.(3)

613 [591] Within the Bemba clan a loosely organized group called "the house" (*inganda*) is recognised which is composed of the descendants of one woman. Richards points out that this matrilineage is in no sense a corporate group.(4) The members of the "house" trace descent to one woman and remember the village where this woman lived. They do not, however, live in one place since the rules of residence at marriage necessitate the scattering of both male and female members of the matrilineage throughout a number of villages. No property is owned in common by its members, nor is its senior male in a position of political authority, although he has certain powers over the women of the group and their children. This dispersed

(1) Richards, 6, 1939, p.62. Food taboos do exist among the Tabwa, see Vleugels J. 1948. (2) Richards, 5, 1937.
(3) This is marked among the Tabwa. See Vleugels, op.cit.
(4) Richards, 9, 1950.

28 also have been employed. Household utensils and vessels were fashioned
32 from wood and gourds. Bracelets and other ornaments were manufactured from
copper-wire or copper bars purchased from the Nyamwezi who smelted copper
[411] in Katanga. The traditional arms were spear, assegai, *pocue* (the short,
broad-bladed, two-edged Lunda sword) and battle-axe.(1) A defensive wea-
pon was the square, lightwood shield said to be unpierceable after being
[726] soaked in water.(2). Bows and arrows were apparently not used in war.(3)

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

CLAN ORGANIZATION(4)

614 The clan (*mukowa*) consists of persons, alive and dead, believed to be descended matrilineally from a common ancestor or ancestress, even though they may not be able to trace their ancestry. The clans, now dispersed, have each a traditional home, *ntulo* (a word also used for the source of a river), a common totemic name (usually the generic name of an animal or plant), and a common slogan, *ilumbo* (from *ukulumba*, to boast). In principle clans are exogamous but in fact this is not observed; the exogamous
● [602] unit is the *cikota*, a subdivision of the clan. Each clan stands in a joking relationship (*bwali*) to one, or sometimes more than one other, with which its name is connected by an association of ideas. Examples of such paired clans are: the leopard and the goat (because leopards kill goats), the iron and the elephants (elephants were hunted with iron-headed spears), the mushroom and the ant-hill (mushrooms thrive on ant-hills). No preferential marriage obtains between the *bali* (persons in joking relationship) as is the case among the Bemba. In the mortuary ceremonies a special role is assigned to a *mwali* of the deceased. An isolated instance of an inter-clan avoidance pattern is provided by the Lion (*Bena Nkalamo*) and the Snake clans. Members of a clan are supposed to give hospitality to their fellow-clansmen whatever their tribal affiliation.

[773] Clan organisation is believed to be universal and coeval with mankind.
No mythical explanation of the origin of clans is offered. Religious or
[784] ritual cults are not practised on a clan basis. There is no prohibition against killing or eating the object from which the clan derives its name, nor, on the other hand, is any special veneration required.

[554] The clans are not hierarchically organised though, in fact, some may enjoy greater prestige owing to their numerical strength or connections and others may be regarded as of little consequence, like the derided Pins and Needles clan. The clan to which the Kazembe's mother belongs is, for the duration of his reign, placed in a privileged position.

As a rule the clans have no specialised economic or ritual functions although the intervention of the Fish clan (*Bena Mpende*) is invoked when the water is too low for the salmon to reach their normal spawning grounds. No clan meetings are held.

(1) Valdez, op.cit., p.239.
(2) ibid.
(3) Burton, p.43.
(4) Based on information provided by I.G. Cunnison who is at present engaged on an intensive study of the Luapula peoples.

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614 554 [616] duties for each other, but this form of social grouping does not seem to affect the political organization at all at the present day.[1]

Within the clan, smaller lineage groups are recognized. These 613 have no distinct name; though the Bemba often refer to them as 'houses' (*amaianda*, sing. *iyanda*) of the same clan. Such a house consists of the direct descendants of one particular ancestress traced back to three or four generations—five at the most. Within this smaller descent group, succession to office is usually limited, and chieftainships tend to become hereditary within three or four generations in such lines.[2] Social replacement of one man for another, either as an heir, an officiant in a religious ceremony, in fulfilment of a marriage contract (in the case of a woman), or in compensation for blood guilt in the old days, tends and tended to take place within the 'house' and not the clan, though members of the *umukoa* do replace each other if there is no one more nearly related within the *iyanda* to do so.

It is the smaller descent-group which is important in considering the influence of the ancestral spirits (*imipashi*, sing. *umupashi*) over the living, either as affecting the welfare of their descendants in general or as entering the wombs of pregnant women of that descent-group to act as guardian spirits to the children as yet unborn.

602 571 Apart from the descent-group that determines his status, there is the body of kinsmen with whom a Bemba co-operates actively in daily life. These are the people with whom he may choose to live, and who gather together at any important event in his life, such as marriage, the birth of a child, illness, or a death. This group is known by a distinct term, the *ulupwa*. It has a bilateral basis, since it is composed of the near relatives on both sides of the family and also relatives in law. The balance between the powers of the maternal and paternal relatives is a very even one in Bemba society, in spite of the legal emphasis on the matrilineal side, and the ties uniting the members of the *ulupwa* are very strong.[3] Though it is

[1] cf. my 'Reciprocal Clan Relationships among the Bemba of North-Eastern Rhodesia', *Man*, December, 1937.

[2] The late Nkula, Bwalya Cangala, claimed, in the course of a succession dispute, that his near relatives, the children of his grandmother, Nakasafye, must now be considered as a separate 'house', as distinct from the children and grandchildren of her sister, Mukukamfumu II (cf. chart on p. 102).

[3] cf. my 'Mother-right in Central Africa' in *Essays presented to C. G. Seligman* (1934).

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more usual to live with kinsmen on the matrilineal side, the grandfather or the mother's brother, yet a man may choose to live with his father's people by preference, and they play an important part at all the great ceremonial occasions in his life. The strength of the bilateral *ulupwa* is in fact one of the distinguishing features of the Bemba kinship system as compared with the strongly patrilineal societies of South Africa to my mind. It affects the political system in two ways. First, it allows for a much greater variety in the composition of the village, and more possibilities of change in its membership; and, secondly, we find in the case of the chief's relatives that the *ulupwa* of a ruler is an important unit in the whole political machine. A ruler's sons receive positions and office as well as his heirs, the maternal nephews; and his father's relatives and those related to him by marriage are also favoured, so that his grip over the country is a strong one.

(2) *Local Grouping*. The local unit in Bemba society is the village (*umushi*, plur. *imishi*). It contains on an average thirty to fifty huts, and is a kinship unit first and foremost. A village comes into being when a middle-aged or elderly man has acquired a big enough following of relatives to justify his applying to the chief for permission to set up a community on his own. He usually builds near other relatives, but land is so plentiful that it is perfectly possible for him to settle almost where he pleases within the chief's domain. The core of the village consists in the first place of the headman's own matrilocal family group, i.e. his married daughters with their husbands and children, and probably members of his matrilineal descent-group, i.e. his sisters and their children. Polygamy is rare. A chief will have a number of wives, say ten to fifteen, but commoners do not often have more than one.

A successful headman will be able to attract more distant relatives to him, both on the patrilineal and matrilineal side. On his death he may be succeeded by his heir, and such a local community may continue in existence with frequent changes in its composition, for two, three, or even more generations. Indeed, the village of the hereditary officials of the paramount chief (*bakabilo*, cf. pp. 100, 108) remain permanently fixed in one village. Thus in every district there are a number of new villages brought into existence by the chief's favour (*ukupokelafye kuli mfumu*) and therefore specially dependent on his support. These include communities newly gathered together by commoner headmen, as

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the first ancestress to inhabit a new chiefdom, or one who was a mother of numerous powerful sons and was thus able to found a new branch, could claim to be so respected.[1] But it is to the men holders of titles that most shrines are built.

The hereditary officials (*bakabilo*) also trace their descent to the first arrival for the most part, and tell stories which account for their right to the ritual offices they hold to-day, e.g. the *bafingo* who now bury the chief, claim to be the descendants of those who buried the first Citimukulus when on the march. This reckoning of descent to a definite epoch in history very clearly remembered is of service in maintaining the myth of absolute continuity of the chiefly lines. In actual fact, the present Citimukulu is a descendant of one Cileshye, who seized the throne from the occupier, Cincinta, only four generations back. This branch of usurpers is able to claim descent from the first Citimukulu all the same. The first ancestors are remembered very accurately and their sacred relics kept. The ensuing vagueness in the chain seems to be of no account.

In most types of succession whether to the name and spirit of a dead man or to his office, there are usually two or three potential heirs, and although there are certain rules of priority, it is practically never the case that there is one child known as heir to the chieftainship from birth and brought up as such, as occurs in those South African tribes in which the eldest son of the great wife must always succeed. A Bemba chief, or commoner, is succeeded by his brothers in order of age, next by his sister's children, and, failing them, by his maternal grandsons. Difficulties arise when there is a choice between an older classificatory 'brother', not a sibling, but possibly a mother's sister's son, or an even more distant 'brother' still, and a young man, a maternal nephew who is the child of the deceased's own sister, with whom, as we have seen, his ties are very close. Here the principles of primogeniture conflict with that of propinquity of kinship, in the case of a branch of a family that has been in existence for three or four generations, and it is probable that in these cases the nearest heir is appointed unless he is manifestly unsuitable, when the more distant 'brother'

[1] e.g. Bwalya Cabala, the first ancestress said to have been fetched from Lubaland by her brothers when the latter had occupied what is now Bembaland; or the Nakasafye, grandmother of the present Nkula, who is described as having started a new line, and was evidently a woman of great character as well as the mother of many sons.

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or 'maternal nephew' is selected. I never heard of a regent being appointed for a young man as is commonly done in those Bantu tribes where the heir to the throne is known from his time of birth.

The situation is more complicated in the case of succession to chieftainships, since through the custom of inheriting one big territorial chieftainship after another within the paramount's immediate family, a tradition has grown up that, e.g., the holder of the Mwambaship should always succeed to the Citimukuluship, whatever the priority of kinship. This claim was put forward in the last succession dispute (1925) and is commonly supported by Government officials who naturally prefer a fixed system of succession to the discussion of rival candidates' rights that seems to have been the older procedure. There is also a tendency becoming more and more evident for certain of these bigger chieftainships to be confined to sub-branches of the main royal line, as distinct from sub-chieftainships which are nearly always given to descendants of local branches of the crocodile clan (e.g. the Mwabaship). This constant growth and separation of different sub-lines or houses of the royal clan seems to have been continuous in the past. The chart of the present central branch of the *Bena nyandu* should make the situation clear. It will be seen that the first and second Citimukulus in this line were siblings, and were succeeded by another pair of own brothers—Citimukulu III and IV, the sons of the first ruler's eldest sister, Candamukulu. The paramountcy then passed to the line of a younger sister, Bwalya Cabala, tradition stating that the eldest maternal nephew of Citimukulu III and IV, then holding office as Mwamba, refused to succeed to the office for various reasons. The title then passed to another pair of brothers in succession, Citimukulu VI and VII, the sons of a younger daughter of Candamukulu—Nakasafye. Hence the famous dispute of 1925 just referred to, between Kanyanta, now Citimukulu, and his mother's mother's sister's grandchild, Bwalya Cangala, then holding the Nkulaship, and reckoned as Kanyanta's classificatory brother. Bwalya claimed that he was own maternal nephew of the dead chief, Ponde, and Kanyanta that he came of an older line and that it had now become established that the Mwambas always succeeded the Citimukulus. The Government supported the latter claimant, but there seems to have been very little to choose between the

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legal rights of the two rivals, and the rather complex machinery of tribal deliberation on such matters (cf. p. 109) was not called into motion.

The chart also shows clearly the way in which certain chieftainships have also tended to become fixed in different family lines of this main branch of the *Bena yandu* even during the last four generations, i.e. the Mwambaship, the Nkolemfumuship, the Mpeposhíp in the line of the chieftainess Mukukamfumu, and the Nkulaship, the Cikwandaship, and the Ceweship in the line of Nakasafye. The separation between these two branches will probably become wider and wider with time. In the case of the outlying sub-chieftainships, this separation off of local family lines of the royal clan has proceeded even further. To conclude, there are definite rules of succession according to Bemba kinship but the type of matrilineal succession usually provides two or three possible heirs, and in the case of the bigger chieftainships there are a number of different factors, such as the paramount's control over the more important *ifyalo*, the traditional order of succession to different offices, local feeling in the case of sub-chieftainships, and last, but not by any means a negligible point, the personal qualities of the candidates themselves.

IV. Functions and Prerogatives of Leadership

The functions of the territorial heads, i.e. chiefs and headmen, seem to be derived from two sources—the position of the leader as head of a kinship group and his role as the representative of a line of dead ancestors in a particular district. In the case of a headman, these two aspects are indistinguishable, while the latter predominates where a chief is concerned.

(*a*) *The Headman*. Bemba headmen are described as looking after, keeping, or actually 'herding the people' (*ukuteka bantu*). As senior kinsman of most of the villagers, a headman is responsible for the discipline of the children and young people; he hears cases informally and directs some economic activities. There are few activities carried out by the whole community in common except fishing and hunting, but besides organizing these latter pursuits a good headman initiates each new agricultural process and encourages and criticizes the younger men and women. Land is not often a matter of dispute in this area. The headman does not allot individual plots, but listens to cases should any arise. He is said to

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'feed his people' and actually does so if they are in need, besides dispensing hospitality to strangers.

The head of the village acts as its ritual head. In the old days, he put up one village shrine to his own ancestors and one or more others to the dead chiefs of the land. This is still done in out-of-the-way parts of the country and in most places, I think, prayers are offered to these tutelary deities, whether shrines are built to them or no. The headman, like the chief, also influences the life of the community through his own person. He must 'warm the bush' (*ukukafye mpanga*) by an act of ritual intercourse with his wife before the huts of a new village are occupied. He blesses seeds for sowing, axes for tree-cutting, and first-fruits. His fire stands for the life of the community as a whole and must be ritually lighted when occasion demands. He presides over the special divination rites connected with village activities, such as the founding of a new community or the death of a member, and blesses new babies or individuals who are sick.

In the political hierarchy, the headman has his definite place. No Bemba may cultivate land except as a member of a village group, and the headman is responsible for organizing the supply of tribute and labour which must be paid to a chief by the community as a whole. He accompanies his villagers to court when they have cases to present and often speaks for them. He transmits the orders of a chief to his people and nowadays those of the Government. His prerogatives are few in number. As head of a kinship-group, he can command personal service from his younger relatives and should be able to exact one day's work from his people on the first day of tree-cutting and sowing. He is always given tribute of beer or meat. But probably, apart from these few economic privileges, the Bemba headman values most his position of authority, his small following, and the favour of his chief.

The sanctions for his authority nowadays are mainly his popularity, together with the strength of kinship feeling, and the belief of the Bemba that it is dangerous to allow an older relative to die injured. His supernatural powers were a source of strength in the old days, but to a very small extent now, and it must be admitted that the forces which keep a village together are not very strong. It is a constant fear to a headman that his people will melt away.

(*b*) *The Chief*. The functions of the different types of chief